A Content Analysis of How TikTok Creates Conversations Around Sustainable and Fast Fashion

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Abstract

Social media has provided a unique opportunity for individuals to share information and opinions, and TikTok's rise in popularity among Generation Z has been astronomical in connecting youth and communities around the world. Users have taken to TikTok to discuss pressing matters, specifically fast and sustainable fashion. This quantitative study examines TikTok hashtags to determine the conversations being discussed on this matter. The findings of this study suggest that TikTok users are creating content to produce meaningful conversations surrounding sustainable and fast fashion.

I. Introduction

Technology and the rise of social media have shaped the way generations think, build communities, and quickly became a core part of existence for many individuals. TikTok's rise to fame has made it the most popular app among adolescents, connecting communities around the world.[1] This platform has provided a unique opportunity for members of the Generation Z population to connect and create conversations on problems that plague modern-day society. The idea that Gen Z has an ability to shape global culture and politics is prominent in mainstream media ecosystems.[2] TikTok is a hub in creating culture and awareness around pressing matters; one of these being the discrepancies behind sustainable and fast fashion.[3]

Fast Fashion can be defined as "an approach to the design, creation, and marketing of clothing fashions that emphasizes making fashion trends quickly and cheaply available to consumers."[4] The fashion market is constantly changing to keep up with the trend cycle, resulting in inexpensive clothes with a high environmental price tag. Fast fashion accounts for more than 10% of carbon emissions globally each

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1 Brooke Auxier and Monica Anderson, "Social Media Use in 2021," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech* (blog), April 7, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/.

2 Tobias Hess, "'Gen Z Will Save Us:' Applauded and Dismissed as a Gen Z Climate Activist (Perspective from the Field)," *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk* 12, no. 1 (August 3, 2021).

3 "From TikTok to Black Lives Matter, How Gen Z Is Revolutionizing Activism - CBS News," accessed November 14, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/from-tiktok-to-black-lives-matter-how-gen-z-is-revolutionizing-activism/.

4 "Definition of FAST FASHION," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fast+fashion.

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year, making it the world's second-largest producer of carbon.[5] In the past year, users of TikTok have used their platforms to speak about fast and sustainable fashion, some even coining it "the sustainable fashion revolution."[6] Sustainable fashion, also known as ethical fashion, is an approach to fashion that refers to producing garments in an ecological and socially responsible way. This study examines the conversations that TikTok creates among adolescents concerning sustainable and fast fashion.

II. Literature Review

Gen Z is the first generation to grow up with internet technology at their fingertips, and they have been exposed to an incredible quantity of technology throughout their lives.[7] These individuals born between the years of 1995-2012 tend to prefer communicating online more than other generations.[8] The integration of technology into the lives of Gen Z has been almost seamless as the lives of offline and online worlds meld into one. Material shared online is consistently taken offline into a face-to-face context in conversation to fill silences, to connect with others, and perhaps most importantly, to shape communities and create the next generation of change.[9] This literature review will cover social media's rise in popularity among Gen Z and the influence it has in creating conversations, fast fashion in relation to social media and consumption, and broadly sustainable and fast fashion conversations among young consumers.

TikTok's Rise of Popularity Among Generation Z

TikTok has been downloaded over 1.5 billion times worldwide, making it one of the most popular apps ever.[10] In the United States alone 62% of TikTok users are between the ages of 10 and 29.[11] Everyone on the app has an opportunity to be a content creator giving any user the chance to go viral and land on the "For You Page."

The short videos make it easy to keep swiping, thus capturing the attention of youth whose attention span is so short.[12] The power that these small videos hold in creating conversations and connecting communities is immense. These videos gain millions of views and hundreds of thousands of likes sharing information and opinions. These videos harness the power to create real change on real social issues. Gen Z has used TikTok as a platform to create change on political matters, health, and more.[13] One of Generation Z's distinguishing qualities is the expression of personal truth.[14] Members of this age value individual identities, oppose stereotypes, and practice identity expressions with pragmatism, regardless of social background.[15] They are more adaptable to change and fluidity, as well as willing to collaborate with people from other backgrounds on common causes and interests. TikTok has created a space where Generation Z can come together for a common cause to create a lasting impact for generations to come.[16] Sustainable fashion is

5 "Style That's Sustainable: A New Fast-Fashion Formula | McKinsey," https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/style-thats-sustainable-a-new-fast-fashion-formula.

6 "Gen Z's Used Clothing Hacks Won't Save the Earth," May 22, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-05-22/gen-z-balances-sustainable-thrifthaul-and-fast-fashion-sheinhaul-on-tiktok.

7 Claire Madden, *Hello Gen Z: Engaging the Generation of Post-Millennials (Revised Edition)*, Hello Clarity, 2019.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Statista, "TikTok Quarterly First-Time Downloads 2021," Accessed October 10, 2021, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1116267/tiktok-worldwide-downloads-quarterly/.

11 Statista, "U.S. TikTok Users by Age 2021," Accessed October 10, 2021, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1095186/tiktok-us-users-age/.

12 Kevser Zeynep Meral, "Social Media Short Video-Sharing TikTok Application and Ethics: Data Privacy and Addiction Issues," chapter in *Multidisciplinary Approaches to Ethics in the Digital Era*, IGI Global, 2021. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-4117-3.ch010.

13 "From TikTok to Black Lives Matter, How Gen Z Is Revolutionizing Activism - CBS News," accessed November 14, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/from-tiktok-to-black-lives-matter-how-gen-z-is-revolutionizing-activism/.

14 Madden, *Hello Gen Z*.

15 "Generation Z Characteristics and Its Implications for Companies | McKinsey," Accessed October 10, 2021, https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies.

16 "From TikTok to Black Lives Matter, How Gen Z Is Revolutionizing Activism."

one area where TikTok users have been speaking out and creating conversations on its significance. Before exploring these conversations further, it is important to look at the impact social media has on the fashion industry.

The Impact of Social Media on the Fashion Industry

The use of social media (and the capacity for individuals to choose their own media sources) has altered how fashion is displayed, covered, and consumed; more intriguingly, social media has altered the foundations of the fashion industry itself.[17] The rise of social media has reshaped the digital media landscape by altering how information is received and transmitted in a networked context.[18] The fashion industry benefits from technological advancements since it encourages users to interact with brands. For fashion companies and brands, social media has ushered in a new era, enabling them to forge new relationships with customers and create new opportunities to reach consumers.[19]

Understanding the functions of brand credibility and brand image in the creation of brand purchase intention is important for fashion brand practitioners when using these technologies.[20] Social media networks help brands connect with a larger audience and establish relationships and credibility with consumers.[21] It is worth noting that despite the growing acknowledgment of the importance of brand credibility and brand image as brand signals, few studies have looked at how brand credibility and brand image influence customer behavior, particularly in the fashion industry.[22] It's not just brands talking about fashion on social media, it is the consumers as well. So how far does credibility and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) really go?

Although communicators' and recipients' motives in eWOM communication may not be strictly commercial, these activities frequently include names of brands/items/venues, and so are likely to influence how commercial entities or their products are perceived.[23] Word of mouth has been regarded as more trustworthy and having a bigger impact on customers' purchase decisions than other communication channels since it is considered a 'natural, authentic, and honest process.[24] The representation of fashion on social media has allowed for one's style and expression to become a critical component of the internet, and has opened up new channels in engaging with fashion brands and ideals. Because the flow of new fashion or styling options is never-ending, and the kaleidoscope of items and trends (whether new or recycled) is continually changing, user-generated fashion messages can always be surprising.[25] When a trend is adopted successfully by several individuals, it impacts the perceived value of the "product" for another consumer, whether that be positively or negatively. The influence of users on social media can change perceptions and form ideas, especially pertaining to the fashion industry.

Influencer Marketing on Fashion Consumption

Influencer marketing is the process of discovering and engaging individuals with a certain target demographic in order for them to participate in a brand's online campaign to improve reach, sales, or engagement.[26] Influencers are individuals who have obtained fame outside of the social media platform

17 Shih-Hui Hsiao, Yen-Yao Wang, Tawei Wang, and Ta-Wei Kao, "How Social Media Shapes the Fashion Industry: The Spillover Effects between Private Labels and National Brands," *Industrial Marketing Management* 86 (April 1, 2020): 40–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.02.022.

18 David Martín-Consuegra, Monica Faraoni, Estrella Díaz, and Silvia Ranfagni, "Exploring Relationships among Brand Credibility, Purchase Intention and Social Media for Fashion Brands: A Conditional Mediation Model," *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 237–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2018.1461020.

19 Laura Rienda, Lorena Ruiz-Fernández, and Lindsey Carey, "Analysing Trademark and Social Media in the Fashion Industry: Tools That Impact Performance and Internationalization for SMEs," *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 117–32. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-03-2020-0035.

20 Martín-Consuegra et al., "Exploring Relationships."

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Rienda et al., "Analysing Trademark and Social Media in the Fashion Industry."

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Sudha M. and Sheena K., "Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: The Fashion Industry," *SCMS Journal of Indian Management* 14, no. 3 (September 2017): 14–30.

(e.g., athletes, actors, singers) or individuals who became famous in the platform itself, usually because they produce outstanding content.[27] Through TikTok, any creator has the chance to go viral and can rise to fame quickly. TikTok has the youngest user base and therefore attracts customer segments who are most receptive to this form of marketing communication. [28] When addressing influencer marketing in the fashion industry, it is worth noting that the influencer's ability to affect consumption behavior has skyrocketed over the past few years.[29] In fact, the global fashion influencer marketing market size was valued at $1.5 billion in 2019 and it is expected to "expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 35.7% from 2020 to 2027."[30] This can be attributed to the fact that consumers are becoming more in tune with trends in relation to fashion consumption, and influencers are considered to be on the cutting edge of fashion trend development. It has been found that in fashion social media, the popularity of the content creator has a favorable impact on the popularity of the post, implying that private label owners employ prominent content creators to promote their brands and products.[31] Brands like Gucci and H&M use influencer marketing to reach the audiences of consumers worldwide.

Influencers who once started as passionate content creators sometimes risk losing sight of what is authentic when money is on the line. A common issue is that once they become famous, some influencers start to partner with multiple or even disreputable brands—sometimes out of mere excitement of being noticed.[32] The problem with this is that influencers have increasingly become an important part of consumers' decision-making process in regards to the consumption of goods as well as affecting the purchasing behavior and attitude towards brands.[33] Fast fashion labels target the audiences where influencers reign and engaging people on social media is key to selling these products. [34] The influencers are the best tool for increases in revenue. This can lead to the promotion and consumption of fast fashion, creating a lasting negative impact.

The High Cost of "High" Fashion

The fashion market today is highly competitive with a need to fulfill consumers' desire for instant gratification, leading to a move by many manufacturers to constantly refresh products to keep up. This need for constant fulfillment and instant gratification leads to the unethical production of clothing and rapid consumption of fast fashion. "Bi Wenfen defines fashion consumption as: an individual's consumption behavior by pursuing fashion in dressing, electronics, diet, behavior, culture and ideas, to obtain a sense of group ownership or self-personalization."[35] Consumers are growing more demanding and fashion-savvy, driving fashion retailers to provide the right product at the right time in the market – in other words, provide quick (fast) fashion. [36] Although these changing dynamics of the fashion industry have resulted in the transition to what is sometimes heralded as the "democratization" of fashion, meaning the latest styles are available to all classes of consumers, the human and environmental health risks associated with inexpensive clothing are hidden throughout the lifecycle of each garment.[37] From the release of untreated dyes into local

27 Michael Haenlein, Ertan Anadol, Tyler Farnsworth, Harry Hugo, Jess Hunichen, and Diana Welte, "Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing: How to Be Successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co.," *California Management Review* 63, no. 1 (November 1, 2020): 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166.

28 Ibid.

29 Julia Lidgren and Mikaela Major, "Social Media Influencers' Impact on Consumers' Sustainable Fashion Consumption: A Qualitative Study on Post-Millennial Consumers," Master's thesis (Gothenberg University, 2021). https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/69053.

30 "Fashion Influencer Marketing Market Size Report, 2020-2027," https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/fashion-influencer-marketing-market.

31 Hsiao et al., "How Social Media Shapes the Fashion Industry."

32 Haenlein et al., "Navigating the New Era of Influencer Marketing."

33 Lidgren and Major, "Social Media Influencers' Impact on Consumers' Sustainable Fashion Consumption."

34 HuffPost, "How Instagram Influencers Are Fueling One Of Our Most Destructive Addictions," February 7, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fast-fashion-influencers-instagram-fashion-nova-waste-climate-change_n_5c5ae8ffe4b0871047598750.

35 Yi-Jing Song and Yu-Ling Bai, "Analysis of Symbolic Meaning and Behavior Characteristics of Fashion Consumption," *Proceedings of the International Academic Conference on Frontiers in Social Sciences and Management Innovation (IAFSM 2019),* 195–200, Atlantis Press, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200207.032.

36 Vertica Bhardwaj and Ann Fairhurst, "Fast Fashion: Response to Changes in the Fashion Industry," *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 20, no. 1 (February 1, 2010): 165–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/09593960903498300.

37 Rachel Bick, Erika Halsey, and Christine C. Ekenga, "The Global Environmental Injustice of Fast Fashion," *Environmental Health* 17, no. 1 (December 27, 2018): 92. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7.

water sources, to workers' low wages and poor working conditions, to the over production and consumption, to the mass waste, the environmental and social costs involved in textile manufacturing are widespread.[38] As one example, the EPA estimates that textile waste in 2018 was over 17 million tons.[39] Young consumers, who are easily influenced by the media, are more susceptible to buy into fast fashion because of the low cost without recognizing the high environmental price tag associated with it. How does fast fashion consumption differ from sustainable consumption among adolescent consumers?

Sustainable & Fast Fashion Conversations Among Young Consumers

Consumption across many product categories is influenced by the human desire to express meanings about oneself and to create an identity. This is perhaps the case with clothing, which is constantly on display.[40] When it comes to sustainably produced fashion, there is a potential to provide a means to alleviate the current strain on social and environmental well-being resulting from fast fashion. "In this way, sustainably produced clothing offers an ethical purchasing choice for fashion-conscious consumers, while simultaneously meeting the needs that fashion, in the traditional sense, satisfies; the construction of identity through consumption." [41] Although the obvious benefits of sustainable fashion outweigh the detrimental impact of fast fashion, fast fashion consumption may look more appealing to younger consumers because of the low cost. Through TikTok, Gen Z has helped drive the growth of second-hand shopping and clothing resale platforms such as Depop and Poshmark.[42] An analysis of TikTok content on sustainable and fast fashion through hashtags can help determine the conversations this platform is creating. The purpose of this paper aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What conversations is TikTok creating around sustainable and fast fashion?

RQ2: Are sustainable clothing videos or fast fashion clothing videos more popular?

RQ3: Is fast fashion portrayed positively or negatively in videos within that hashtag?

RQ4: What are common themes are expressed across the videos analyzed?

III. Methods

This study consists of quantitative content analysis of 100 videos to better understand the conversations that TikTok is creating around sustainable and fast fashion. "Content analysis, more specifically a quantitative analysis, has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding."[43] Content analysis is a research method that analyzes written, verbal, or visual communication. Using content analysis as a research method requires coding occurrences that the researcher can then sort into data into distinct categories. The researcher developed a codebook based on existing content analysis studies of TikTok.[44] This study will code video content for type, theme, sentiment, and gender to analyze major topics and themes encompassing these videos.

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38 Ibid.

39 US EPA, OLEM, "Textiles: Material-Specific Data," Collections and Lists, September 12, 2017, https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/textiles-material-specific-data.

40 Lisa McNeill and Rebecca Moore, "Sustainable Fashion Consumption and the Fast Fashion Conundrum: Fashionable Consumers and Attitudes to Sustainability in Clothing Choice," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 39, no. 3 (2015): 212–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12169.

41 Ibid.

42 Bloomberg.com, "Gen Z's Used Clothing Hacks Won't Save the Earth," May 22, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-05-22/gen-z-balances-sustainable-thrifthaul-and-fast-fashion-sheinhaul-on-tiktok.

43 McNeill and Moore, "Sustainable Fashion Consumption."

44 "Communicating COVID-19 Information on TikTok: A Content Analysis of TikTok Videos from Official Accounts Featured in the COVID-19 Information Hub | Health Education Research | Oxford Academic," https://academic.oup.com/her/article/36/3/261/6154696.

To select the sample of videos to be analyzed, the researcher searched the TikTok app for the hashtags "#fastfashion" and "#sustainablefashion". These two hashtags were selected on the basis that they would provide the most robust results within this study. Based on search results, the researcher was presented with the top 50 liked videos under each hashtag. Each video was then watched from start to finish and coded using instruments developed from existing studies.

A Microsoft Excel sheet was created to store all of the data extracted from TikTok videos. The final codebook focused on user engagement, quantified impact, video format, and video content. All 17 coding categories are outlined in Appendix 1.

IV. Findings & Discussion

All links to videos were collected on November 3, 2021 for the two hashtags and placed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. TikTok arranges hashtag videos by likes and therefore, the top 50 most liked videos were collected and analyzed for each hashtag.

TikTok provides verified badges to help users make informed choices about the accounts they choose to follow and the credibility they hold. A verified badge indicates that TikTok has confirmed that the account belongs to the user it represents. Of the 100 TikTok accounts that were analyzed, 12 videos under #sustainablefashion and 6 videos under #fastfashion contained blue check marks and were therefore verified. It is worth noting that these verified accounts included the likes of CBS News, sustainability & zero waste influencers, and sustainable clothing brands.

The quantified impact dimension provided findings regarding these TikTok accounts' influence and engagement levels. The top 50 most-liked videos under each hashtag were analyzed, with #fastfashion videos having over 68 million views (Table 1), and #sustainablefashion videos having over 371 million views (Table 2). The total number of likes of all videos analyzed under #fastfashion was more than 10 million, compared to more than 49 million for #sustainablefashion. On average #fastfashion received 1 million views while #sustainablefashion received about 7 million.

The maximum number of comments for #fastfashion was 21,000 and for #sustainablefashion 38,800, with the minimum number of hashtags for these both being zero. The large number of comments suggests that users are highly engaged within these topics of interest. The minimum of zero can be noted due to TikTok users disabling the comment section on their videos. The total number of shares for videos under #fastfashion was over 248,000 and over 851,000 for #sustainablefashion. Evidently, many of the videos using these two hashtags are being vastly shared by users creating significant number of engagements and interactions. The results of this study show that these two hashtags create many conversations among the users on TikTok.

Table 1 - #FastFashion

	Number of followers	Number of Views	Number of Share	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
Minimum	1,078	277,300	51	91,600	0
Maximum	2,000,000	5,100,000	31,800	964,400	21,300
Median	58,600	1,150,000	2,652	169,500	1,731
Average	204885.5714	1,364,062	4,968	225,448	2,615
Sum	10,039,393	68,203,100	248,419	10,821,500	130,735

Table 2 - #SustainableFashion

	Number of followers	Number of Views	Number of Share	Number of Likes	Number of Comments
Minimum	2,701	1,100,000	713	328,200	0
Maximum	11,600,000	43,500,000	292,900	4,700,000	38,800
Median	228,200	4,700,000	6,220	769,400	2,321
Average	1,146,560	7,589,796	17,022	994,414	3,701
Sum	57,328,001	371,900,000	851,087	49,720,700	185,059

A one-way ANOVA analysis was preformed to determine if the difference was significant between the mean number of views between the videos under the hashtags #fastfahion and #sustainablefashion (Table 3). The results of this study indicate a statistically significant difference between the groups ($F(1, 282)=15.7966$, $p=0.0001$). These results indicate it is unlikely due to chance that the views of sustainable fashion videos are much higher than fast fashion videos.

Table 3 - One-Way ANOVA For Views Between #fastfashion & #sustainablefashion (Group 1=Sustainable Fashion, Group 2=Fast Fashion)

Data Summary				
Groups	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Std. Error**
Group 1	153	124.549	233.7131	18.8946
Group 2	131	251.2672	302.9093	26.4653
ANOVA Summary				
Source	**Degrees of Freedom (DF)**	**Sum of Squares (SS)**	**Mean Square (MS)**	**F-Stat**	**P-Value**
Between Groups	1	1133241.2564	1133241.2564	15.7966	0.0001
Within Groups	282	20230541.3164	71739.5082		
Total:	283	21363782.5728			

The Video Content analysis examined the types of videos being posted under the hashtags of fast and sustainable fashion, the common themes among these videos, and the specific characters and sentiment of these videos (Table 4).

Table 4 – Video Content

Video Content	Fast Fashion	Sustainable Fashion
Video Type	37 self-recording, 1 news report, 1 documentary, 8 other	All 50 self-recording
Video Theme	39 fast fashion, 8 ethical consumption, 2 not relevant	37 Sustainable fashion, 6 sustainability, 5 thrifting
Sentiment	41 negative, 5 positive, 4 neutral	All 50 positive
Gender	41 female, 7 male	34 female, 10 male, 6 none

#FastFashion

In terms of video type, self-recording took the lead (37 of 50) for #FastFashion. Other video types included an excerpt from a documentary, a news excerpt from CBS, and other montages of TikTok videos. The most common video theme under #fastfashion was unsurprisingly, fast fashion (39 out of 50). Videos within this category featured the negative effects of fast fashion such as unethical manufacturing and sweatshops, thrift shopping and ethical consumption, access to clothing and fast fashion, and negative reviews of fast fashion conglomerates. For example, a fashion influencer with the username @urfashionistafriend posted a video exposing the fast fashion brand Shein on its unethical practices when it comes to clothing production on sweatshops and child labor. Another example, from user @zeroinqi, includes a montage of Shein clothing hauls, followed by photos highlighting the negative effects of fast fashion, urging their users to "please take care of the planet, our climate is in bad shape and fast fashion is really bad."[45] The results of this study suggest that TikTok cultivates conversations around fast fashion in a negative light, in regard to environmental pollution and ethical conditions.

Of the 50 videos under #fastfashion, the sentiment towards fast fashion in general was negative for 41 of them. The rest encompassed five with a positive attitude towards fast fashion, and the other four were neutral. Of these four neutral videos, conversations focused on socioeconomic status and access. Two of these videos specifically raised concerns with the economic cost of shopping sustainability. Those living in poverty or lower socio-economic status, have greater access and desire to shop at fast fashion outlets due to its affordability rates.

The second most common theme was ethical consumption (8 of 50). One conversation in particular under this video category gained over 800,000 likes and more than 12,000 shares, and focused on whether can there be ethical consumption under capitalism. The results suggest there is a genuine concern among Generation Z TikTok users when it comes to fast fashion consumption. One TikTok sound from the user @curli_fries clearly addresses this issue.

> So what I've learned on TikTok is that I can't shop at thrift stores since I contribute to the gentrification of thrift prices, but I also shouldn't shop fast fashion places like Forever 21 because they use child labor sweatshops, but I also shouldn't shop at Goodwill because they treat disabled employees horribly, but I also shouldn't shop on Amazon because Jeff Bezos, but I also can't afford to get all my clothes at high end fashion stores, but I also don't want to take all the cute clothes from my local thrift stores in low income areas… did I get that right?[46]

Conversations under this category also focused on those living below the poverty level and their access to shopping for clothing. These videos explored and explained conversations on how it is a privilege to shop ethically and that it is a privilege to be able to buy new clothes. Shopping sustainably is a luxury and excludes a large part of the population due to its lack of affordable prices, forcing those with lower incomes to be pushed to shop at fast fashion stores. Often, these fast fashion brands offer trendy and affordable clothing giving low-income individuals a sense of societal inclusion and approval. Another driver of conversation under this category was access to plus-sized fashion. Some thrift stores may be more expensive than fast fashion and finding trendy comfortable clothing is increasingly difficult. Fast fashion conglomerates offer trendy and sometimes better suited options when it comes to plus-sized fashion. This study indicates that privilege and access are a large part of the conversations around fast and sustainable fashion on TikTok.

Under #fastfashion, eight of the 50 videos (18%) were in Spanish, one in Polish, one in French, and three indicated that they were based in the United Kingdom. This study speaks to the global nature of the conversations that TikTok is creating when it comes to fast and sustainable fashion. In terms of gender, 41 of the videos were created by women and seven were created by men. Notably, of the seven videos created by men, three held a positive attitude towards fast fashion; only two videos by women expressed similar positive opinions toward fast fashion.

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45 @zeroiniq. *Please Take Care of Our Planet, Our Climate Is in Bad Shape and Fast Fashion Is Really Bad #dc #fyp #foryoupage #fastfashion*.

46 @curli_fries. *So.. There's No Ethical Consumption under Capitalism?*

#SustainableFashion

In terms of video type, all 50 of the videos analyzed under #SustainableFashion were self-recordings. Self-recording is the most prominent video type for both hashtags. This speaks to the relatable nature of TikTok and content creators wanting to personalize their videos. The most common video theme under #sustainablefashion was sustainable fashion (32 of 50). Videos within this category featured sustainable fashion brands and small businesses, sustainable clothing, and upcycling videos. Upcycling videos accounted for 23 of the 37 sustainable fashion videos in this category. For example, the user @vintagestockreserve spoke to the benefits of upcycling as an alternative option to discourage enabling fast fashion in a video that received over 1.4 million likes and 11,000 shares. Other videos in this category included DIY clothing and sewing how-to videos instead of buying from the likes of Forever 21. This present study highlights that TikTok users are making videos promoting upcycling and sustainable clothing instead of shopping fast fashion. Another common theme was thrifting, which accounted for 12 of the 50 videos. This study indicates that Generation Z TikTok users are promoting the act of second-hand shopping and thrift shopping in order to help save the environment and save money.

The most common theme under #sustainablefashion was sustainability (6 of 50), featuring videos highlighting living a zero-waste lifestyle, ecofriendly products, and the benefits of sustainability. Users posting within this theme would show examples of living a zero-waste lifestyle and the reasons behind why it matters so much. Under this hashtag, the sentiment towards sustainable fashion was all positive. The results of this study suggest that TikTok users feel more positive towards sustainable fashion than they do towards fast fashion. In terms of gender, 34 of the videos under #sustainablefashion were produced by female users, and 10 of the videos were produced by males. The other six videos had no gender association. The sustainable fashion hashtag had twice as many men creating content than the fast fashion hashtag. Eight of the videos were in Hindi, once again speaking to the global conversations that are being held on sustainable fashion.

The video form analysis examined the format in which these 100 videos were presented. Generation Z are drawn to trending TikTok challenges, which usually involve a popular song or hashtags, so many videos incorporate current trends. Sixty-two of the videos included no talking; five of those videos included lip-synching. Messages are frequently generated in short videos with little or no talking and sometimes have lip-synching. In terms of hashtags, all 100 videos included other hashtags besides the two being analyzed. The most common hashtags used beside the hashtag #fastfashion were #shein, #thrift, #fyp, and #stopfastfashion. The most common hashtags used beside the hashtag #sustainablefashion were #ethicalfashion, #slowfashion, #zerowaste, and #upcycle. As described previously, TikTok is a social media platform that uses algorithmic observation and inference. Hashtags play a role in this algorithm, that chooses customized content for unique users, and content creators on this app use it to their advantage. [47]

V. Conclusion

This study suggests that TikTok users are creating content to produce meaningful conversations surrounding sustainable and fast fashion. The results show that users across the world are connecting on significant topics and themes such as the detrimental impacts of fast fashion, access to ethical fashion and socioeconomic status, ethical consumption, and shopping second-hand. It is clear that videos under the hashtag #sustainablefashion gain more views and engagement than those under the #fastfashion. However, the results show that both hashtags have over millions of views, likes, and engagements meaning they both are large creators of conversation among users. The results also show that viral fast fashion videos generally have a negative connotation, and that videos pertaining to sustainable and ethical fashion have a more positive connotation. Overall, the results of this study prove that users on TikTok engage heavily in conversations pertaining to fast and sustainable fashion.

This study has certain limitations. First, this investigation lacks intercoder reliability. "Intercoder reliability, more specifically termed intercoder agreement, is a measure of the extent to which independent judges make the same coding decisions in evaluating the characteristics of messages, and is at the heart of

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47 "How to Grow Your Audience | TikTok Help Center," accessed December 1, 2021, https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/growing-your-audience/how-to-grow-your-audience.

this method."[48] Given time constraints, this study only had one coder and therefore lacks intercoder reliability. Second, the number of likes, comments, shares, and followers may not sufficiently be measured in only one session, as they change daily. Additional studies should include further coding sessions to reflect the dynamics of this new social media platform. Third, although a content analysis is a commonly used method in video analysis, it may still have limitations when coding the unique aspects of videos of short duration. Specific coding schemes for videos produced on TikTok are scarce. These limitations give opportunities to expand upon further research. While 100 TikTok accounts is a significant number for a qualitative research study, widening the analysis of quantitative content with a larger sample could add more depth to the results collected in this investigation.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: Coding Categories

Account Information	
Username	Refers to the username of the TikTok account who posted the video
Official Verified Account	Refers to whether or not the TikTok account is verified, represented by a blue check mark (verified badge)
Quantified Impact	
Number of Followers	Total number of Account Followers
Number of Likes	Total number of Likes the video received Total
Number of Comments	Total number of comments left on the video
Number of Shares	Total number times the video was shared
Number of Views	Total number of views the video obtained
Video Content	
Video Type	Refers to the content of the video in categories of documentary, self-recording, news report, excerpt from TV, & demonstration, other
Video Theme	Refers to the major topic involved in the video, encompassing sustainability, fast fashion, sustainable fashion, ethical consumption, thrifting, and not relevant
Sentiment	Refers to the sentiment involved in categories of positive, negative, or neutral
Gender	Refers to the gender of the character(s) in the video
Video Form	
Background Music	Refers to the background music used, including no music, music selected from the TikTok music library, and original music
Talking/No Talking/Lip Synching	Refers to whether the character(s) in the video were talking, not talking, or lip synching
Subtitles/Text	Refers to whether there is subtitles
Subtitle Colors	Refers to whether or not the subtitles were presented with color or black and white
Hashtags	Refers to the hashtags used by the uploader in the video's caption